

Office Memorandum • UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

TO : Files

DATE: 3 February 1953

FROM : A [REDACTED]

SUBJECT: Lysergic Acid (LSD)

1. Lysergic Acid is a synthetic chemical having similar molecular structures of various ergot derivatives. As is well-known, ergot is a rust which affects rye during its growth. Also well-known is the fact that ergot has certain properties which produce mental derangement, mental and physical disorders, and in certain forms can produce death. Ergot, however, has very valuable medicinal value, particularly in connection with treatment of women before and after childbirth and in curing certain types of migraine headaches.

2. Lysergic Acid (LSD) has, up until recently, been produced by the SANDOZ Chemical organization whose main headquarters are at Basel, Switzerland. The synthetic ergot (LSD) was developed by a Dr. Hoffman, who is the chief researcher for Sandoz. One of Dr. Hoffman's many outstanding assistants, and apparently a protégé of Dr. Hoffman's, is Dr. Rudolph Birchler also a Swiss National.

3. For many years, it has been well-known that various doctors, psychiatrists, scientists in various countries in Europe have been experimenting with ergot or Lysergic Acid. This has been, as far as is known, almost always purchased from the Sandoz organization which sells chemicals to the world. This experimentation generally is of a psychiatric nature but there have been certain indications that some countries, and possibly the Soviet Union, have considered the use of Lysergic Acid for either chemical warfare, psychological warfare, or military purposes.

4. Since the unusual properties of ergot and more importantly Lysergic Acid have been known to ATTENTION for some time, the development of this chemical has been of intense interest.

5. In connection with this, the writer learned long ago that [REDACTED] (one of the outstanding researchers in the field of narcotic, hypnotic and soporific chemicals and drugs) was doing research work in Lysergic Acid and was reportedly advocating its study and use. Subsequently, [REDACTED] made several trips to Europe and during those trips to Europe he visited numerous individuals and discussed Lysergic Acid with them and spent a considerable amount of time with officials of the Sandoz Company including [REDACTED] and others. [REDACTED] upon his return from Europe in 1952, made a report in connection with this and again stressed the interest in and importance of Lysergic Acid.

6. Over a month ago, this office received a dispatch through the Contact Division which indicated that [redacted] (mentioned above) was then visiting the United States, apparently for the purpose of visiting Sandoz's New York representatives and having general discussions concerning Sandoz's productions (particularly Lysergic Acid). The information forwarded to this office indicated in a not too specific manner that [redacted]'s trip had some military significance but this has never been checked out. This dispatch indicated that [redacted] was in contact with [redacted] and that [redacted] would apparently spend some time either at the home of [redacted] or in [redacted]'s company and [redacted] desired some authorization to proceed in an attempt to "pump" [redacted] for information concerning Lysergic Acid and other pertinent related information. Since it was indicated after consultation between [redacted] of OIS, [redacted] of Security, and the writer that [redacted] could possibly secure more information from [redacted] than anyone else, a very general authorization was given to him to attempt to obtain from [redacted] such information that he thought pertinent. The results of this have not yet been made available to this office. It should be noted for the record that [redacted] is not in as far as is known a consultant to this Agency but is a Consultant to the [redacted] of the [redacted] and holds an [redacted] contract for many thousands of dollars for research purposes. The writer is not certain whether or not this Agency in any way is indirectly financing [redacted] but it has been established that [redacted] of OIS is well aware of [redacted] work and apparently through [redacted] channels is more or less able to control the activity of [redacted].

7. On 29 January 1953, [redacted] and the writer had a long discussion with [redacted] of OIS and much of this material was covered in this conference. That [redacted] usefulness to this Agency will be has not yet been ascertained, but apparently [redacted] feels that [redacted] in some ways a problem.

8. For matter of record, apparently chemists of the [redacted] working for OIS have in the past few weeks succeeded in breaking the secret formula held by Sandoz for the manufacture of Lysergic Acid and have manufactured for this Agency a large quantity of Lysergic Acid which is available for our experimentation. This work is a closely guarded OIS secret and should not be mentioned generally.

A [redacted]

[redacted]